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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2020

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Stay Home, Stay Healthy. Visitors Urged to Avoid Vacationing in Valley County

Cascade, Idaho – Valley County, in partnership with the City of Cascade, City of Donnelly, City of McCall, St. Luke's McCall Medical Center and the Cascade Medical Center, are asking visitors to stay home and stay healthy. It is imperative that our community follows CDC guidelines of social distancing, self-isolation in homes and avoiding unnecessary travel.

We are faced with an unprecedented global crisis related to the COVID-19 viral pandemic. Hospital providers and staff across Valley County have been preparing rapidly for a response to the arrival of the virus in the local community. However, resources cannot support an influx of travelers. In an open letter to the Valley County community, Dr. Gregory Irvine, MD, Chief of Staff at St. Luke's McCall Medical Center urges prospective visitors to stay home. "We are small, rural, critical-access hospitals, and have limited resources, especially as it pertains to intensive care," says Irvine. "While our hospitals are prepared to care for the citizens of Valley County and surrounding areas, an influx of people from elsewhere risks overwhelming the limited resources at our hospitals."

Resort towns like McCall, Donnelly and Cascade are at unique risk from the pandemic due to a perception that there is safety to be found in rural communities. "People are arriving in rural towns, in large numbers, from all over the State and Country to take 'virus vacations,'" says Irvine. "I can think of little that is more inappropriate and dangerous than this mindset."

At this time, no mandatory closure orders have been issued in Valley County, however, many independent businesses have shut their doors for the next several weeks, limiting recreational opportunities in the region. Brundage Mountain Resort, Tamarack Resort, the Little Ski Hill, the Activity Barn and the Cascade Aquatic and Recreation Center are currently closed. In addition, Valley County has suspended most snowmobile grooming, but is still maintaining access to backcountry residences. Many restaurants have closed in-house dining, offering only carry out options.

"Please let us do our job by providing urgent needed care to our citizens," says Irvine. "You will be welcome here with open arms when this unparalleled pandemic is over."

- MORE -

To read Dr. Irvine's full letter, and find additional local resources about the novel coronavirus, please visit www.co.valley.id.us.

If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19:

CALL FIRST: If you have a fever, dry cough or shortness of breath, please call your healthcare provider. A risk assessment will be conducted over the phone and guidance on next steps provided.

St. Luke's McCall: (208) 634-1776
Cascade Medical Center: (208) 382-4285

WHEN TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT: If you are having difficulty breathing or significant shortness of breath, please proceed to your local Emergency Department. **CALL AHEAD** (St. Luke's McCall: (208) 634-1776, Cascade Medical Center: (208) 382-4285). Even if it is from your vehicle in the parking lot. This will alert healthcare providers to provide you with a face mask and take the necessary precautions to protect themselves.

COVID-19 prevention recommendations:

STAY HOME. Limit any and all non-essential social engagements and gatherings. Try to maintain a six foot "personal bubble" from others. When we begin seeing increased disease activity in our communities, this is important to reduce transmission of this virus.

PREVENT THE SPREAD. Make sure you are washing your hands with soap and water and using alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently. Cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow or into a tissue. Try not to touch your mouth, eyes or face with your hands.

PROTECT THOSE AT GREATER RISK. This disease disproportionately effects the elderly and people with underlying chronic disease. It is up to all of us to do our part to protect those vulnerable populations by staying home.

BE INFORMED. This situation is fluid, and it is changing rapidly. Keep up to date with current and accurate information from Idaho Health and Welfare, Central District Health and the Center for Disease Control websites. You can access these websites at stlukesonline.org.

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